

THE SOUTH AND THE NEGRO

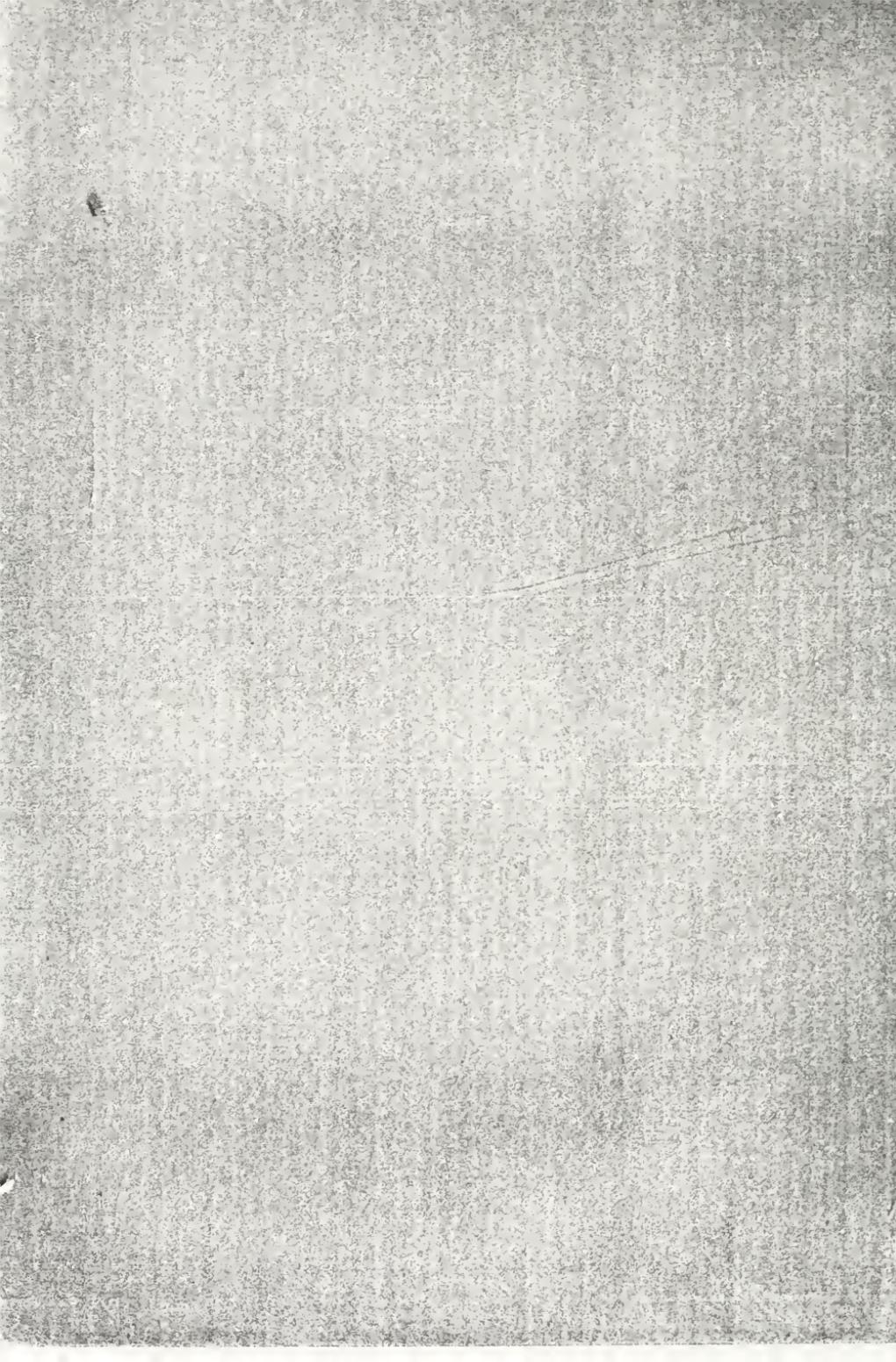
AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE SEVENTH ANNUAL
CONFERENCE FOR EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH,
BIRMINGHAM, ALA., APRIL 26TH, 1904.

BY

THE REV. BISHOP CHARLES B. GALLOWAY
OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH

NEW YORK

PUBLISHED BY THE SOUTHERN EDUCATION BOARD
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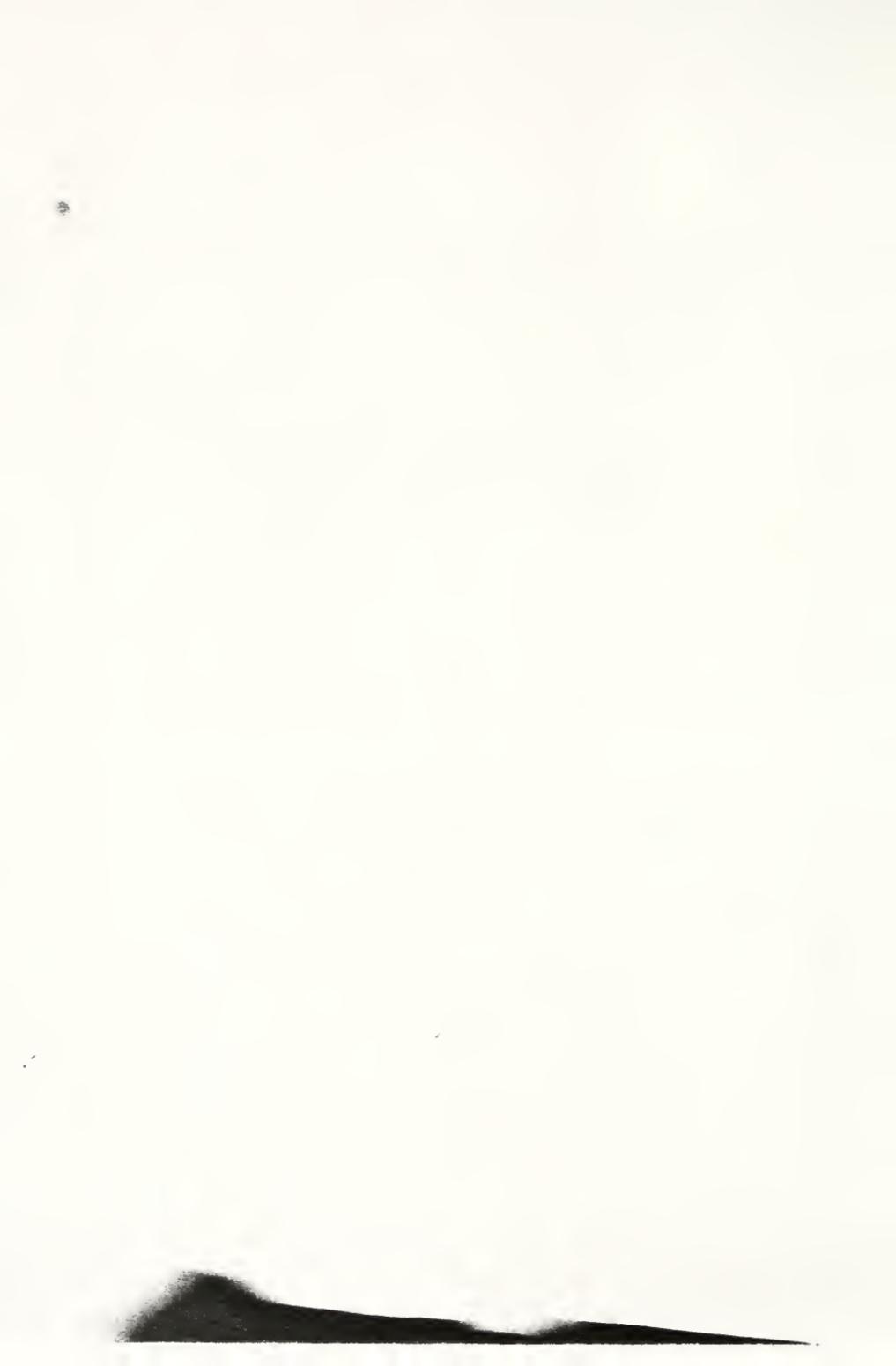
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THE SOUTH AND THE NEGRO

BY BISHOP CHARLES B. GALLOWAY

The subject of this hour's discussion is not of my selection. With the honored invitation to accept a place on the programme of this great convention came also the request that I should speak on "The South and the Negro." The distinguished honor of this request was accorded, not because I have capacity to speak on this subject by the authority of fuller and more accurate knowledge than others, but rather because I live in the South and am a friend of the negro.

Some acquaintance with this section and its citizenship I ought to have gained from life-long residence and eager observation and unwavering devotion. From my birth to this good hour I have lived in Mississippi—the most intensely Southern of all Southern States—and where, because of their immense numbers, the so-called "problem" of the negroes is most acute. It is, therefore, not for want of opportunity, if I lack information, or am possessed of misinformation.

I shall speak to-night with perfect candor, if not with approved wisdom. And I appear not as the partisan of an idea, but as an ambassador of the truth and a lover of my country.

In offering some thoughts on the subject assigned I shall not review ancient history, but consider present conditions. It is time for us to cease discussing who is most responsible for American slavery. Present duty has been neglected in an acrimonious wrangle over history. For, after all, the only difference between the South and the North on the slavery question is the difference between father and grandfather. My father was connected with slavery, and so was their grandfather.

Our memories are only a little more vivid because somewhat shorter.

I would not presume to speak dogmatically as to the mind of God with reference to the future status of the negro. Into that infinite and holy realm I have neither capacity nor temerity to enter. On what specific lines the race will move through the coming centuries, I dare not attempt to prophesy. But I do know that all our dealings with these people should be in the spirit, and according to the ethics, of the Man of Galilee. What is best for them now should be the measure of present duty, leaving the future to His hands who knows the end from the beginning. And we must insist that the negro have equal opportunity with every American citizen to fulfil in himself the highest purposes of an all-wise and benevolent Providence.

Whatever the cause or causes, there is no disguising the fact that there is great unrest and growing discontent among the negroes of the South. They are beginning to feel friendless and hopeless. The frequent lynchings that disgrace our civilization, the advocacy by some of limiting to the minimum the school advantages provided for them, and the widening gulf of separation between the younger generations of both races, have produced a measure of despair.

There are few negroes in my native State of Mississippi, the owners of property, who would not sell out at a fair valuation. Many of the thriftiest and most conservative feel, whether justly or not, that sentiment is so hostile to their race as to make all their values insecure. And as opportunity offers they are quietly leaving the sections in which they have long lived and labored.

We need not close our eyes to the inevitable. We are soon to face industrial disaster unless conditions are radically changed. Our cotton lands will lie fallow and our fertile fields cease to yield their valuable staples. Already the scarcity of labor is the despair of large landowners.

To improve or remove these strained relations is the duty of every Southern patriot who believes in the industrial and commercial future of these parallels.

Unfortunately for this question, and for the best interests of both races, it has not been eliminated from local and na-

tional polities. So long as it furnishes an easy and exciting issue for contending partisans, there will be little opportunity for constructive statesmanship to deal wisely with the stupendous problem.

It requires but little ability to excite the fears and inflame the prejudices of a people. Any street urchin can shout "Fire!" and stampede an audience, even when there is no danger. And if there be some occasion for alarm, the panic becomes wild and uncontrollable. Then it is men refuse calm counsel and wise suggestion. So it is with the social and political issues that may be used to play upon the fears of the masses.

The old cry that "white supremacy" may be imperilled is a travesty on Anglo-Saxon chivalry. With every executive, judicial and legislative office of the State in the hands of white people and with suffrage qualifications that have practically eliminated the negro from political affairs, the old slogan is the emptiest cant.

This is no question for small politicians, but for broad, patriotic statesmen. It is not for non-resident theorists, but for practical publicists; not for academic sentimentalists, but for clear-visioned humanitarians. On a subject of such vital concern to State and nation, passionate declamation and partisan denunciation are to be deplored. Oh, that some patriot may arise, with the prescience of a statesman and the vision of a prophet and the soul of an apostle, who will point out the path of national duty and guide our people to a wise and heaven-approved solution of this mighty problem!

But for some of the acute phases of this question the South can be acquitted of blame. The once beautiful and pathetic attachments of the older people of both races were rudely severed, not alone by the shock of war, but by the fanatical unwisdom of certain boasted benefactors.

Mistakes that have become a tragedy were made by some misguided persons who came South after the war to be the political teachers and leaders of the negroes. Representing themselves as the only friends of the recently emancipated race, they made denunciation of former slave-owners an apology for their presence, and a part of the negro's education. That

policy only complicated the difficult problem. It poisoned the spirit of one race and aroused the fierce antagonism of the other. Hate was planted in hearts where the seeds of love should have been sown, and races that ought to dwell together in unity were separated by bitter hostility. The times of such folly are gone, but their tragic results are our mournful heritage.

In the study of this momentous question some things may be considered as definitely and finally settled:

First.—In the South there will never be any social mingling of the races. Whether it be prejudice or pride of race, there is a middle wall of partition which will not be broken down.

Second.—They will worship in separate churches and be educated in separate schools. This is desired alike by both races, and is for the good of each.

Third.—The political power of this section will remain in present hands. Here, as elsewhere, intelligence and wealth will and should control the administration of governmental affairs.

Fourth.—The great body of the negroes are here to stay. Their coerced colonization would be a crime, and their deportation a physical impossibility. And the white people are less anxious for them to go than the negroes are to leave. They are natives and not intruders.

Now let us consider some of the duties we owe these people, committed to us as a trust.

First.—They must be guaranteed the equal protection of the law. To do less would forfeit plighted faith and disrupt the very foundations of social order. All the resources of government should be exhausted in protecting innocence and punishing guilt. There should be no aristocracy in crime. A white fiend is as much to be feared as a "black brute." The racial line has no place in courts of justice. Offenders against the peace and dignity of the State should have the same fair trial and the same just punishment, whatever their crime or color of skin.

And the majesty of law must be enthroned and sustained. When its sanctions are disregarded and its mandates are not respected, the very foundations of government become in-

secure. If confidence is destroyed in the decisions of courts there is no protection for life and property. We have reason for real alarm at the phenomenal growth of the spirit of lawlessness. And it is not confined to any one section of our great country. I give it as my deliberate judgment that there is never an occasion when the resort to lynch law can be justified. However dark and dreadful the crime, punishment should be inflicted by due process of law. Every lynch-er becomes a law despiser, and every law despiser is a betrayer of his country. The lynching spirit, unrestrained, increases in geometrical progression.

But there are indications of a better day. After our night of sorrow, there is promise of a more hopeful morning. Our best citizens are becoming alarmed and public sentiment is being aroused. A camp of Confederate veterans in Mississippi, composed of heroic men, who feared not the wild shock of battle in contending for what they believed to be right, recently passed some vigorous resolutions against this spirit of lawlessness, in which occur these strong words: "Mob violence is antagonistic to liberty, and ultimately leads to anarchy, desolation and ruin." And in this ringing utterance they voice at once the deep conviction and profound humiliation of our best citizenship. We have a good people in our State, loving justice, hating wrong and despising unfairness. They are ready to uphold the majesty of the law when demands are made upon them.

Second.—The right education of the negro is at once a duty and a necessity. All the resources of the school should be exhausted in elevating his character, improving his condition and increasing his capacity as a citizen. The policy of an enforced ignorance is illogical, un-American and un-Christian. It is possible in a despotism, but perilous in a republic. It is indefensible on any grounds of social or political wisdom, and is not supported by any standards of ethics or justice. If one fact is more clearly demonstrated by the logic of history than another, it is that education is an indispensable condition of wealth and prosperity. This is a universal law, without exemption or exception. Ignorance is a cure for nothing.

"It is strange, indeed," says Mr. Murphy, "if education—a

policy of God long before it was a policy of man, a policy of the universe long before it was a policy of society—were to find its first defeat at the negro's hands."

Of course, educational methods may be unwise and inadequate, and educational auspices may be unfortunate and unwholesome. In such event the proper course is not to close the school, but to change the methods—not to stop the teaching, but to improve the teachers. "The repression of it will result, not in its extinction, but in its perversion." That results have been disappointing, there is no room to doubt. Even the most sanguine and sentimental must admit that a good deal of prophecy has not been fulfilled. Yet progress has been made, and we have much to inspire hope and encourage effort.

Several years ago, when standing before a great audience in Tremont Temple, Boston, it gave me pardonable and patriotic pride to utter these words: "I come from a State where liberal and equal provision is made for the education of our colored children in the common schools. And there is practically no sentiment in favor of withholding from them the best possible scholastic advantages. Whatever doubts some may entertain, all are united and fixed in the purpose to test the virtue and potential force of education in solving the gravest question that has ever been presented to the people. It is written in the organic law of the State, and has become the settled policy of our people."

I deeply regret, Mr. President, that it is impossible for me to repeat so emphatically those words this evening. Some of our good people—not a majority, I am glad to say—have become so disappointed over educational results that they have almost reached the point of despair. Impatient in their desire to see larger returns from well-meant efforts and liberal appropriations, they have raised the question as to the wisdom of a radical change of policy. I am sure, however, that the facts do not justify their honest fears.

But what would be the effect of a policy of suppression? Suppose we close the thirty thousand negro schools of the South, what would be the result? Let Dr. Curry tell us: "Ignorance more dense, pauperism more general and severe, crime,

superstition and immorality rampant." We would not survive such a policy. The boasted strength of our governmental institutions could not endure the strain. We cannot have a democracy for one class of our population, and a despotism for the other. We cannot elevate and subjugate at the same time. And, above everything, let us be just. I am jealous for my people, that they be not amenable to the charge of injustice. We must keep our covenants. The utterance of a distinguished political leader of my State I make my own:

"There is nothing so unprofitable as injustice. There is nothing which will react with such deadly effect upon the character of any people as the practice of wrong and oppression upon the weak and helpless. The denial of opportunities for education to the negro can be justified upon no good grounds. It ignores the teachings of Jesus. It is contrary to the genius and spirit of Christianity. It proposes a solution of the problem which is at variance with the fundamentals of our religion. Nothing could ever justify it, even to our consciences."

And that view is held by the greatest leaders of the South. No man who ever represented my native State of Mississippi in the highest councils of the nation more correctly interpreted her truest thought on all great issues than did L. Q. C. Lamar. And no man among us ever had a more enthusiastic following. His great deliverances became the accepted doctrines of his people. A profound political philosopher who never contented himself with a surface view of any subject, and who had unconcealed contempt for mere partisan harangue, he gave to every question which concerned the welfare of the State and Nation the sincerest and most patriotic consideration.

When a measure was pending in the Senate proposing national aid to education, Mississippi's distinguished Senator gave expression to matured views that commanded the applause of the entire State. A few sentences from that great speech may be reproduced with profit. Northern Senators had intimated lack of confidence in the State's educational authorities to distribute the fund equitably, and suggested amendments to the bill. Senator Lamar said:

"I say with entire confidence that this distrust is not deserved; that Senators are mistaken as to the state of feeling

in the South with reference to the education of the negro. The people of the South find that the most precious interests of their society and civilization are bound up in the question of his education—of his elevation out of his present state of barbarism. I shall enter into no argument upon that subject. I intended to read some authorities on it, but my friend from South Carolina (Mr. Hampton) has anticipated me."

After quoting from Dr. Mayo, Professor Smart and other Northern educators, who had been South and had applauded the heroic efforts of the Southern people to educate both races alike, Senator Lamar further said:

"The problem of race, in a large part, is a problem of illiteracy. Most of the evils, most of the difficulties, which have grown up out of that problem have arisen from a condition of ignorance, prejudice and superstition. Remove these, and the simpler elements of the question will come into play with a more enlightened understanding and a more tolerant disposition. I will go with those who will go furthest in this matter."

In educational statesmanship, no voice has been more potential in America during the past quarter of a century than that peerless Southern leader, the late Dr. J. L. M. Curry. The echoes of his marvellously musical voice will continue to thrill the hearts of American patriotism like the inspiring notes of a bugle. Alas! that he is not a conspicuous figure in this convention to-night. In a masterly address before the constitutional convention of Louisiana, a few years ago, he spoke these grandly eloquent words:

"The negroes, unlike alien immigrants, are here not of their own choosing, and their civil and political equality is the outcome of our subjugation. Neither their presence nor their civil equality is likely to be changed in our day. The negroes will remain a constituent portion of the Southern population and citizenship. What are to be our relations to them? Are they to be lifted up, or left in the condition of discontent, ignorance, poverty, crime, barbarism? Shall one race have every encouragement and opportunity for development for higher civilization, and the other be handicapped and environed with insurmountable obstacles to progress? Are friction,

strife, hatred, less likely with the negro under stereotyped conditions of inferiority than by the recognition and stimulation of whatever capacities for progress he may possess? Shall we learn nothing from history? Do Ireland and Poland furnish us no lessons?"

Wise words and wisely spoken. By these principles, so eloquently enunciated by our great leaders, the country will unfalteringly stand. Whatever the discouragements and seeming failures, the policy inspired by Christianity and vindicated by history will not be reversed. And in all the coming years that which will be spoken of most to the honor of the South was that, out of the wreck and ruin of war, with little left but the charred and scarred remains of fire and tempest, she gave with an almost lavish hand to the education of the negroes. Every line on that page of her brilliant history will be glorious with the unstinted praise of the civilized world.

From the declaration that education has made the negro more immoral and criminal, I am constrained to dissent. There are no data or figures on which to base such an indictment or justify such an assertion. On the contrary, indisputable facts attest the statement that education and its attendant influences have elevated the standard and tone of morals among the negroes of the South. The horrid crimes, which furnish an apology for the too frequent expressions of mob violence in these parallels, are committed, almost without exception, by the most ignorant and brutal of the race. I have been at not a little pains to ascertain from representatives of various institutions the post-collegiate history of their students, and I am profoundly gratified at the record. I believe it perfectly safe to say that not a single case of criminal assault has ever been charged on a student of a mission school for negroes founded and sustained by a great Christian denomination.

"To school the negro," says a certain editor, "is to increase his criminality. Official statistics do not lie, and they tell us that the negroes who can read and write are more criminal than the illiterate. The more money for negro education, the more crime. This is the unmistakable showing of the United States census."

Now, I do not hesitate to affirm that the United States census shows unmistakably exactly the opposite—that education has decreased crime. A careful study of the exact figures will show that the proportion of negro criminals from the illiterate class has been 40 per cent larger than from the class which has had school training. And when we consider further that it is naturally and notoriously easier to convict a poor negro of any crime than a white man who has influential friends and well paid counsel, the strength of the statement is irresistible and unanswerable.

Joel Chandler Harris, the distinguished author and political philosopher, and whose interpretation of the Southern negro has given him world-wide and immortal fame, in a recent article in the Saturday Evening Post, gives this emphatic testimony:

"The idle and criminal classes among them make a great show in the police court records, but right here in Atlanta the reputable and decent negroes far outnumber those who are on the lists of the police as new or old offenders. I am bound to conclude, from what I see about me and from what I know of the race elsewhere, that the negro, notwithstanding the late start he has made in civilization and enlightenment, is capable of making himself a useful member of the community in which he lives and moves, and that he is becoming more and more desirous of conforming to all the laws that have been enacted for the protection of society."

The Hon. W. M. Cox, of Mississippi, prominent in the political councils of his State, for years a leading figure in our state legislature, and a scholar, has given his judgment on this question, which perfectly accords with my own observations. He says:

"When I consider all the circumstances of the case, the negro's weakness, his utter lack of preparation for freedom and citizenship, and the multitudinous temptations to disorder and wrongdoing which have assailed him, the wonder to me is, not that he has done so ill, but that he has done so well. No other race in the world would have borne itself with so much patience, docility and submissiveness. It is true that many grave crimes have been committed by negroes, and these have

sorely taxed the patience of the white people of the South. I do not blink at their enormity, and I know that they must be sternly repressed and terribly avenged. But I insist that the entire race is not chargeable with these exceptional crimes, and that the overwhelming majority of the race are peaceable, inoffensive and submissive to whatever the superior race sees fit to put upon them. Their crimes are not the fruit of the little learning their schools afford them. They are the results of brutish instincts and propensities which they have not been taught to regulate and restrain."

And in this scheme for their education a constructive statesmanship suggests that proper training be provided for those who may become the teachers and wise leaders of their people.

The true theory of negro education in the South has been admirably stated in these words: "The rudiments of an education for all, industrial training for the many, and a college course for the talented few." The thirty thousand negro public schools of the South, on which \$7,500,000 are expended annually, and for which we have spent \$125,000,000 since 1870, must be supplied with competent teachers of that race.

To every man among them with the evident qualities of leadership, we should lend our Christian sympathy and a helping hand. President Tucker, of Dartmouth College, was entirely correct when he said: "I believe with a growing conviction that the salvation of the negro in this country lies with the exceptional men of that race." And those, who have studied the philosophy of Christian missions and the progress of civilization, will tell you that the same is true of all the peoples of the earth. We train and Christianize the exceptional men who are to be the real redeemers of their race, whether in China, Japan, India or Africa.

Professor Max Muller gives authoritative and conclusive testimony on this momentous matter: "The intellectual and moral character of a nation is formed in schools and universities, and those who educate a people have always been its real masters, though they may go by a more modest name."

When Professor Tholuck reached the fiftieth anniversary of his great career as teacher of theology at Halle, he received hearty and grateful congratulations from pupils and friends in

all parts of the German empire. The Emperor sent him the decoration of the Order of the Black Eagle. Students, with torches, marched in procession past his windows, singing one of Luther's immortal hymns. What a significant and appropriate tribute to one of the mightiest forces in the empire! The man who was fitting teachers and preachers to mould the moral and religious thought of the nation, might well receive recognition and honor from the throne itself. For without the security given the empire in the ethical and religious instruction of the church and school, the throne itself would become unsteady, and the crown would rest uneasily on the Emperor's anxious head. And if for an empire, how much more important for a republic in which every citizen is a sovereign and peer of the realm!

Other phases of this problem of the nation I have not time to consider. Already I have trespassed too long upon your patience.

My message is to the younger people of the South. Into their strong hands the country is soon to be committed. The facts of history eloquently confirm the wise observation of Goethe, that "the destiny of a nation at any given time depends upon the opinions of its young men who are under twenty-five years of age." Upon them must devolve the solution of this problem. It requires great wisdom and long patience. But God rules, and right the day must win.

Young men of my country, in everything dare to do right. Have faith in God and the future. Stand by the underlying principles of our great republic, and the coming years will vindicate your manly independence and uncorrupted patriotism. Kepler, the great astronomer, who won for himself the title of "legislator of the skies," rejoiced more in truth than in titles, in honor than in honors. When his work, "The Harmonies of the World," was first published, he said: "I can afford to wait a century for a reader, since God Himself waited six thousand years for an observer." And so every man who is dominated by honest convictions and is inspired by a righteous ambition to promote the best interests of his country can well afford to abide the certain and triumphant vindication of the future.

